

Girl dies —brother in court

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By Marina Gottschalk
The Tribune

MARTINEZ — Beri Olson 12, of Rodeo, died in Doctors Hospital in Pinole yesterday afternoon without regaining consciousness from the bludgeoning she received two weeks ago.

At nearly the same moment, her 15-year-old brother, Doren, appeared in juvenile court here, charged with her attempted murder.

Doren was arrested Friday after a lengthy interrogation by Contra Costa sheriff's detectives. At a detention hearing here yesterday, juvenile court referee Michael Coleman ordered him held until he is arraigned March 8. He is currently charged with attempted murder, but it's likely the charge will be amended to murder.

Doren was crying as he was led out of the courtroom.

Beri was discovered lying unconscious on a railroad trestle near Joseph's Resort in Rodeo late on the night of Feb. 14, shortly after Doren ran into the family's Lake Street home and told his mother and stepfather that he and Beri had been kidnapped by four men.

Doren said the men drove the two youngsters around for a while, then forced them to get out of the car and walk. Doren said he managed to escape and ran home.

He subsequently admitted that he and his sister had not been kidnapped, but did not admit the beating.

Sheriff's deputies said they knew what weapons had been used in the beating.

Beri, who suffered severe

See BROTHER, Page B-2

ARCH 24
Continued from Page B-1

head injuries, had been at Doctors Hospital since the attack, comatose and on life-support systems. A hospital official said she had been "brain dead" for several days.

Doren left Rodeo after the attack to live with his father in the Santa Cruz area, but returned after detec-

tives said they needed to talk with the boy.

Sheriff's spokesmen said they have not determined the motive for the attack.

Beri was a sixth-grader at Carquinez School in Crockett. The school principal, Roger Martin, described her as a likable, cooperative, "bouncy little kid."

Young girl's killing shakes friends, school

By Andy Jokelson
The Tribune

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CROCKETT — Flags hung at half-staff outside Carquinez Elementary School here yesterday in memory of Beri Olson, a 12-year-old sixth-grader from Rodeo whose 15-year-old brother is accused of bludgeoning her to death.

Her classmates are "very upset, they're confused, naturally," said her teacher, Shirley Mannheimer. "It's shaken their little world."

Mannheimer said she told her students "that Doty (Beri's nickname) had died ... and that we would miss her very much. She was such a good friend to us and many others. ... Mostly, I remember her as being such a good friend to other people."

Another teacher said the school's principal, Roger Martin, made a simple announcement over the public address system "that she had been hurt for some time and now she had passed away. ... We observed a few moments of silence in respect for her."

Beri's brother, Doren, is charged with attempted murder and is being held by juvenile authorities. The Contra Costa County sheriff's office is expected to change the charge to murder.

Beri Olsen, who was the youngest of seven children raised by their mother, Patricia Cooper, was bludgeoned in the head late Feb. 14 or early Feb. 15 near Joseph's resort in Rodeo. She was found comatose and

remained so and on life support systems until she died at Doctors Hospital of Pinole on Tuesday afternoon. She had been brain-dead for several days, a hospital official said.

Relatives, neighbors and others said Doren and his sister had gotten along well.

"They were not enemies in any way, shape or form," said principal Martin. "These kids were not given to violence, they'll scrap with the rest of them, but not that sort of an attack."

He described Beri as a happy, enthusiastic, "neat little kid ... a little tomboy, always had a little smile on her face."

But he said illnesses suffered by her mother and grandmother, Virginia Cooper, who also lives with the family, made it "hard for them to keep up with all those kids" and difficult for them to "provide the supervision that they needed."

Martin said being out late at night "was not an unusual situation" for Beri or her brother, who is a 10th-grader at John Swett High School, just across the street from Carquinez school.

Jack Turner, assistant principal of the high school, said Doren Olsen "hasn't been a major discipline problem at our school." He said the boy was not involved in school athletics or other student body activities and was "one kid you don't see too much of. He doesn't make himself stand out."

One student at the high school

said "I just thought he was a bum," while another described him as a "punk."

His mother said he and Beri were "very close ... they were good friends. He was extremely worried about her ... They tried to look out for one another," she said. "I don't think Doren had anything to do" with the beating of his sister. "He was framed or used or whatever."

Lou Pereira, a former next-door-neighbor who runs a combination candy store, bus terminal and sewing machine repair business in Rodeo, said, "they always behaved themselves around me down here."

"They both called me grandpa ... I never had any problems with either one of them."

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